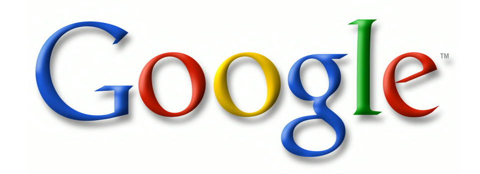
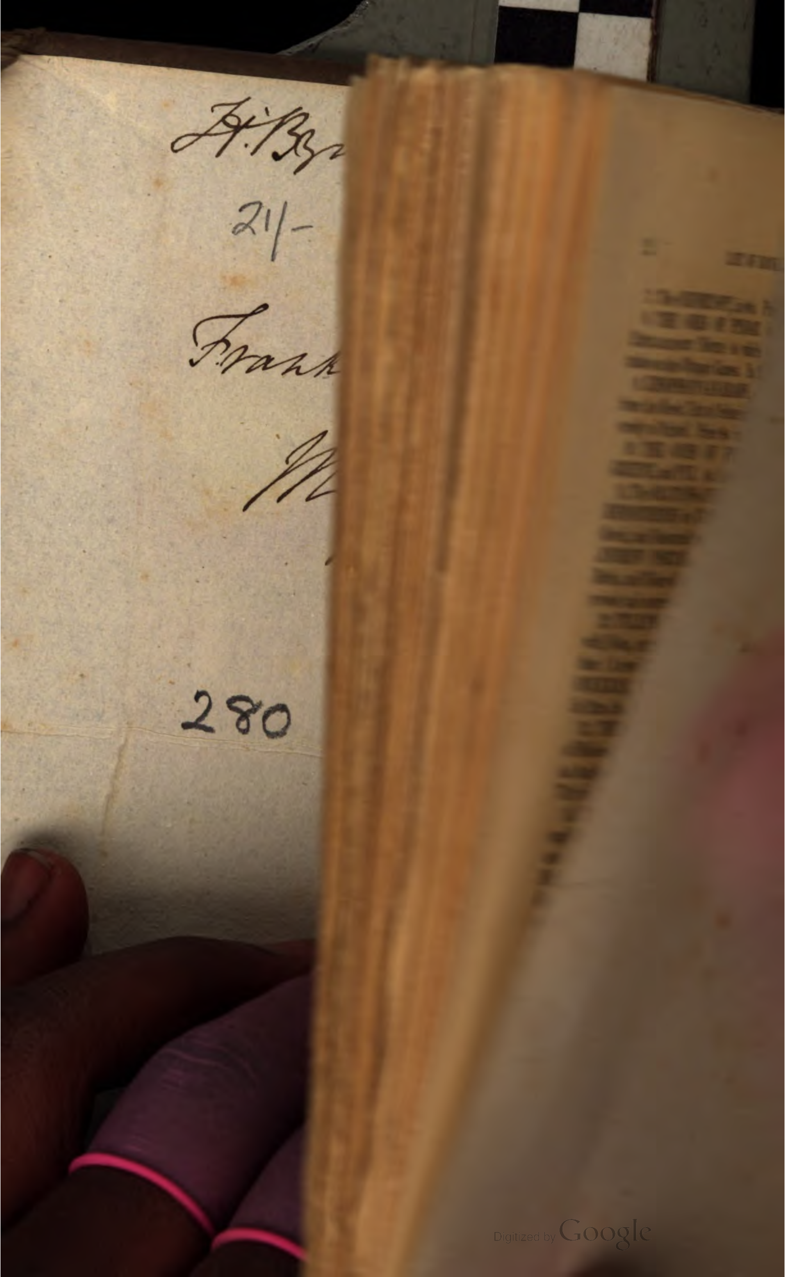





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CONTINUATION

OF

DON JUAN.

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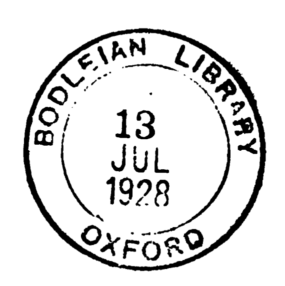
CANTOS XVII. AND XVIII.

——— Sequiturque patrem non passibus æquis. VIRG.

LONDON,

FOR G. B. WHITTAKER, AVE-MARIA-LANE; AND
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MDCCCXXV.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

As I really believe that there are some persons who have not read Don Juan, it is necessary, for the comprehension of these Cantos, that such persons should be informed of the following facts. Don Juan, after leaving Spain, had suffered shipwreck and been present at the siege of Ismail, where he had rescued a young female child, whose name was Leila, who afterwards accompanied him. He passed some time at the court of the Empress Catherine, and then came to England; where he was now on a visit at Norman Abbey, the seat of Lord Henry de Amundeville. One of the guests was Aurora Raby, a Catholic. The Abbey was said to be haunted by the apparition of a Friar; and the last incident in the 16th Canto was the discovery made by Don Juan, that a figure which he had taken for the ghost was the Duchess of Fitz-Fulke.

DON JUAN.

CANTO XVII.

DON JUAN.

CANTO XVII.

I.

COLD is that hand, which sweetly, wildly swept
  The magic chords to many a varied theme;
It seem'd as if his melody ne'er slept,
  Or every thought was a poetic dream:
Those strings are mute: the tuneful Sisters wept,
  When Death's dark cloud obscur'd his radiant beam:
Far from his home, in that bright land he died,
In Greece, the grave of Genius, and the pride.

II.

Oh Greece! full well he lov'd thee: he had drain'd
  Ethereal streams from the Castalian fount;
Full oft in fretful strains had he complain'd,
  Tracing thy vales, or on the classic mount,
Of Liberty and Poesy, which wan'd,
  Which wither'd, droop'd and died, and he would count
Those dazzling names, which in thy happier days
Shed o'er thy glorious land a meteor's blaze.

III.

Then would he pour the swelling tide of song,
  And tell thee of the deeds thy sons had done,
Thy sons in times gone by, when thou wert young,
  And Freedom spurn'd the shackles of a throne:
Then would he sing thy loves, or would prolong
  The tale of blood, when conquest gaily shone,
Leading the warrior bands of Greece to spread
Invading millions on their gory bed.

IV.

Thy groves of myrtle and of olive, hills
Where Bacchus with a rich luxuriance swelling
From purple clusters pours delicious rills;
Thy dark-hair'd maids, whose darker eyes are telling
The tale of love, which their fair bosom fills;
Thy temples still the stroke of Time repelling;
Of these he sang, and would have rous'd thy slumbers
To deeds of ancient glory by his numbers.

V.

Oh! had he liv'd, he might have seen the flame,
Which late from Freedom's ashes has arisen,
Brighter and brighter glowing, till it came
To that full blaze, which from thy gloomy prison
Had mark'd the path to vengeance and to fame:
He heard the cry; nor tamely did he listen,
His music and his deeds had urg'd thy sons
To arms, and all thy shores were Marathons.

VI.

Then midst those souls with patriot ardor glowing
The Bard of Britain had the triumph shar'd,
His heart, his voice, his very soul o'erflowing,
To see thy sons their galling chains discard;
While double wreaths of laurel had been throwing
Their classic shadows o'er the warrior bard;
Greeks had exclaim'd,—a Byron comes to free us,
Be he our chieftain, he our new Tyrtæus.

VII.

Who was Tyrtæus? I will tell you, readers,
Or Mitford tells you in an early chapter:
When Sparta, greatly frighten'd, wanted leaders
To combat the Messenians—they had rapp'd her
So hard, that she had sent some special pleaders
To ask the Oracle's advice, who tapp'd her
Upon the back, and answer'd, My opinion
Is that you seek for aid in an Athenian.

VIII.

They sent to Athens, but with no great hopes;
For these two cities were a little jealous:
But Phœbus will'd it—he's a fool, who copes
With what the gods decree, as poets tell us;
So, though they were not quite upon high ropes,
They ask'd th' Athenians, who so little zealous
Were in their cause, that when the message came,
They only sent a poet, who was lame.

IX.

A man may limp, because one foot is short,
And yet may write a very good hexameter;
(Which means, according to the Greek, a sort
Of verse, which, if we measure its diameter,
Is six feet long; sometimes in boyish sport
We give five feet, and call it a pentameter:)
Such verses wrote Tyrtæus, and in fame
Was great as bard and warrior—though lame.

X.

At first the Spartans did not like him much,
  They wanted not a writer, but a fighter:
One thing alone they lik'd in him—his crutch,
  A sign, that when the battle-blaze grew brighter,
He would not run away; his strains were such,
  That as he sang each buoyant heart grew lighter;
He wrote—they fought—at length he tun'd his shell
To sounds of victory—Messenia fell.

XI.

Byron in many points was like Tyrtæus,
  He limp'd, wrote verses, favor'd liberty,
And died in Greece—alike were their ideas,
  Though different their ends: whate'er could die
Of him, whom Athens sent from the Piræus,
  Died midst the joyous peals of victory,
With many a friend around his bed attending,
To cheer the gallant spirit, which was wending.

XII.

But he, our Bard, upon a foreign strand,
Self-doom'd, a voluntary exile bearing,
Far from his ancient halls and native land,
With strangers' eyes upon his death-bed staring,
Breath'd out his troubled spirit: Death's cold hand
Snatch'd him from that bright cause, which he was sharing,
Ere Freedom's infant struggles well could cheer
The Hero-Poet sinking on his bier.

XIII.

Oh! that a mind like his should thus decay!
So fraught with genius, but so overcast
With those dark thoughts, which make our morbid clay
Dreary and cheerless as the wintry waste,
With no bright suns to chase the clouds away,
No genial warmth to mitigate the blast.
His was the eagle's eye—but it would gaze
On depths of gloom, and scorn the mid-day blaze.

XIV.

He lov'd to trace the picture's darkest shade,
 The brightest beams of light on him were lost:
Not sweets, but venom, was the spoil he made
 From Nature's garden, where sweet flow'rs are tost
In rich profusion, though so soon they fade,
 And each one gathers what delights him most:
He cull'd the deadliest herbs; and would distil
Juices of blackest die to dip his quill.

XV.

He painted Nature stern, revengeful, wild,
 The untam'd lion, or the treach'rous asp:
He jested with our crimes; and if he smil'd,
 'Twas the short, horrible, delirious gasp
Of him, who mopes in madness: but the mild,
 The soft, the tender passions he would grasp
Not with the gentle hand, and sportive eye,
But like a giant playing with a fly.

XVI.

'Twas sad to break affection's dearest ties,
'Twas sad to fly his country and his home;
But sadder ne'er to lift his fev'rish eyes
To those bright beams of tenderness, which come
To point our aspirations to the skies,
And bid us burst the shackles of the tomb;
Beams, which our darkest passions can control,
And shed their healing influence o'er the soul.

XVII.

Oh! had he drunk of that ethereal spring,
The cup of living waters overflowing,
He had not been that restless, wretched thing,
All joys condemning, and all joys foregoing;
Nor had he felt the deep relentless sting
Of fell remorse within his bosom glowing;
He had not sung less sweetly, nor have given
Less radiant landscapes ting'd with hues from heaven.

XVIII.

But he is gone—to the last dread account
  His troubled soul has wing'd her sudden flight;
He's gone—and may some drops from mercy's fount
  Wash out those livid spots, which like a blight
Blasting full many a Genius, that would mount
  On Hope's swift pinions to the realms of light,
Chains it to Earth; or, sadder, can compel
The Soul itself to be a tort'ring Hell.

XIX.

And shall we heap reproaches keen and bitter,
  Keen as the shafts which he himself could throw?
Shall malice, dæmon-like, rejoice and twitter,
  Because the Scoffer is at length laid low?
The Creed he ridicul'd is surely fitter
  To weep, than to rejoice, at others' woe:
What woe so awful, as the Sinner's soul
Call'd unprepar'd to reach it's final goal?

XX.

Oh! could a flood of penitential tears
 Wash all those foul impurities away,
Which like dark clouds amidst the radiant spheres
 Pollute his brilliant pages, and array
The holiest themes with most unholy sneers,
 Jesting at sin and God's mysterious way:
Oh! could we pluck away the pois'nous weeds,
Which the rank hotbed of Indulgence breeds.

XXI.

It cannot be the fashion of our age
 To libel God, and laugh at man's frail dust;
Nor does our prurient taste require the page
 Of Poetry to pander to our lust:
Well may the Bard defy the Critic's rage,
 But if the cheek of Modesty has blush'd
To trace the luscious picture, who would buy
Such fame? can wit atone for blasphemy?

XXII.

Sweetly he sang Abydos' bridal daughter,
And him, who rov'd a pirate o'er the seas;
Full many a tale he told of love and slaughter
Entwin'd in Harold's changeful destinies:
Though much he lov'd to cleave the stormy water,
Spurning the placid wave and sunny breeze,
Yet through the gloom few thoughts were seen to rise,
Which ting'd the virgin cheek with deeper dies.

XXIII.

But in a luckless hour he chose a theme
Already courted by full many a Muse;
But not to him exhausted did it seem,
So much of good and evil might he choose,
And mixing them might raise a transient gleam
Of sympathy for vices which amuse;
A poison, that by skilful artist blended
Full oft in ruining the soul has ended.

XXIV.

Young, beauteous, cast in Nature's fairest mould,
  A lamb at home, a lion in the field;
Sprung from an ancient line, and proud to hold
  The noble thoughts, which noble birth can yield,
His early years by watchful care controll'd,
  A Mother's fondness and Religion's shield—
Such is the Juan, whom our Poet's pen
Paints as the fairest, bravest, worst of men.

XXV.

When all conspir'd to steer his gallant bark
  Unhurt by jutting rock and treach'rous shoal,
Who would not mourn, that tempests loud and dark
  Gather'd in whirlwinds round his troubled soul,
And urging him in madness to embark
  Wreck'd his fair hopes, and drove him to that goal,
Where flames and ceaseless tortures are the doom
Of howling Spirits in the realms of gloom?

XXVI.

Such was the sketch our poet's pencil drew:
  His Hero was to pass through many a scene
Of war, of love, and slaughter; and the clew
  To all his joys and troubles would have been
A blind submission to that baneful crew
  Of passions, which, whate'er may intervene,
Rush madly on, regardless of the smart,
Which others feel, till Death uplifts his dart.

XXVII.

But Death, relentless Tyrant, has cut short
  The hand that sketch'd the portrait, and consign'd
Don Juan's " life and fortunes" to the sport
  Of Critics and of Poets left behind:
Some laugh, some blush: and those, who from report
  Condemn the moral, still seem half inclin'd
To grieve, that Death should wither such a laurel,
And leave his works unfinish'd, though immoral.

XXVIII.

But who is he, that with presumptuous hand
  Shall finish what a Byron has begun?
The structure, which his mighty Genius plann'd,
  Would crush the puny enterprise of one,
Who all a stranger to the tuneful band
  Would urge his too advent'rous steeds to run
In that bright course of poetry and fame,
Where mightiest bards have earn'd a deathless name.

XXIX.

But Hope, presumptuous Hope, inspires my lay;
  I rush a willing victim to the field:
Come on, ye Critics, and in stern array,
  Monthly or Quarterly, your weapons wield:
Let Gifford ply the lash, let Jeffrey flay;
  Such lines as these an easy triumph yield:
But weigh the moral—if that be not good,
I ask no quarter, and invite the rod.

XXX.

We'll state conditions: all that Byron wrote
  Cannot be alter'd: we must take Don Juan,
Such as he made him; and his Spanish coat
  Will still become him better than a new one:
But for the future I shall steer the boat
  Just as I please, and paint as if I drew one,
Who tempted once or twice to be a rake
Had still his final character to make.

XXXI.

I care not what the poet *meant* to do;
  I am not bound to make you hate his hero;
Nor, though 'twas promis'd, send him to the crew
  Of hellish fiends with Claudius and Nero:
His Spanish blood, though up at ninety-two,
  By skilful management may cool to zero:
In short I mean to make him what I please;
And as for principles, my own are these:

XXXII.

I cannot join in thinking Southey stupid,
  Or Wellington a tyrant: I deny
That English morals give to little Cupid
  An easy reign; or that our clouded sky
Low'rs o'er a fallen nation; and if you bid
  Me look through Britain's changeful history,
I cannot see from old or modern story,
That we're at all behind our sires in glory.

XXXIII.

Land of my sires! if e'er my recreant finger
  Should sweep the chords in sound of thy dispraise;
If on my tongue the feeblest note should linger,
  Which one loose thought, one burning blush can raise;
If any flatter and applaud the singer
  For sceptic hint and for ambiguous phrase;
May my right hand forget her cunning, may
My palsied tongue refuse her wonted lay.

XXXIV.

So much for preface; and with trembling quill
  I now commence the sequel of our tale:
If execution could but match the will,
  And good intentions could as much prevail,
As water from the Heliconian rill,
  Or that light gas, which poets' brains inhale,
My flowing lines should beat Lord Byron's hollow,
Without one votive off'ring to Apollo.

XXXV.

We left the Don and Duchess of Fitz-Fulke
  In what is call'd a singular position.
The most good-natur'd are dispos'd to sulk
  And feel indignant at an imposition,
Or hoax, or as 'tis reckon'd by the bulk
  Of wits a harmless joke; but the derision,
Which follows practical attempts like these,
Is sure much oftener to offend than please.

XXXVI.

Don Juan felt, that what had seem'd a ghost
Was cloth'd in most substantial flesh and blood:
Her eyes betray'd her: had he been a post,
He could not more immoveable have stood:
It was not fear congeal'd him, or at most
He fear'd, that when the case was understood,
The laugh would turn against him; and it may be,
He fear'd the laughter of Aurora Rabey.

XXXVII.

Where was his Spanish gallantry? and where
The fam'd *sang froid*, which Spanish Dons possess?
An Irishman would have begun to swear;
A Frenchman would have said, Excuse my dress:
But our young hero, of romantic air,
Finding his nightly visitant was less
A disembodied spirit than a mortal,
Turn'd on his heel, and soon regain'd his portal.

XXXVIII.

At length he laugh'd within himself; his candle
  Did not burn blue, as he had lately thought:
The curtains shook not; and at least no handle
  Was giv'n to those, who gladly would have caught
At such a rich material for scandal,
  And easily had made a story fraught
With ev'ry point to raise surmises, such is
Midnight, a gallery, a don, a duchess.

XXXIX.

Perhaps he acted wisely in retreating:
  He sav'd his character, and went to sleep:
But she, whose fancy had contriv'd the meeting,
  Was not dispos'd to overlook the deep
And gross affront: she went to bed repeating
  That soon or late the Spanish boy should weep.
Her sleep was broken, and the abigail
Wonder'd what made her mistress look so pale.

XL.

Up rose the sun, and up arose Don Juan;
That is, the sun rose first, he some hours later:
For in those polish'd times it would undo one,
If any thought of ringing for hot water,
And getting out of bed to see the dew on
The grass, those early, vulgar gems of nature.
In two short hours he had contriv'd to make fast
His cravat, and by twelve came down to breakfast.

XLI.

Dear hour of breakfast! balmy sweet reviver
Of health and vigour in our drowsy souls!
Whether the strong bohea be thought the giver
Of some new juices; or if butter'd rolls,
With ham and eggs, (whoever is a liver
At college loves to breakfast upon fowls,)
Recruit our frame, enabling us to wait
With patience till the dinner-bell at eight;

[ ] hated - H - 13 -

XLII.

Howe'er this be, 'tis certain that the voice,
Which summons us to breakfast—whether early
Rubbing our eyes we waken and rejoice
To hear the coachman mutter rather surly
"Just twenty minutes"—or if happier choice,
Stranger to coaches and their hurly-burly,
Has plac'd us snug in bed, with leave to snore,
And call for tea and toast at any hour,

XLIII.

The voice, which summons us to breakfast, sounds
Like music wafted on the zephyr's wing:
The sulky and ill-temper'd heal the wounds
Which hunger and impatience often bring;
The sparkling eye looks brighter, mirth abounds;
And if we wish to say a tender thing,
What time more fit, than when some gentle dame
Asks us to hand a tea-cup or the cream.

XLIV.

The guests look'd hard on Juan as he enter'd;
All conversation was suspended quite;
All eyes were scanning him; all thoughts seem'd centred
In guessing, whether he had pass'd the night
More calmly than the last; till some one ventur'd,
More philosophical or more polite,
To say, "Good morning, Sir, the weather's cold,"
A piece of news in England often told.

XLV.

It happen'd, that the only vacant place
Was opposite to where the Duchess sate:
Don Juan bow'd respectful to her Grace,
And wish'd her a good morning; but she ate,
Not noticing the compliment, a brace
Or two of mouthfuls which were on her plate,
Not deigning to look up or to reply,
Which quite derang'd his Spanish gravity.

XLVI.

He could not eat his breakfast: he forgot
  That fingers were not made for sugar-tongs;
And though the tea was most exceeding hot,
  To which a spoon most properly belongs,
He pour'd the scalding liquid down his throat,
  As if he'd iron round about his lungs:
But he was not so lucky; and his eyes
Swimming in tears express'd his miseries.

XLVII.

" Do pray, Aurora Rabey, hand the cream,
  " Your neighbour is in pain," exclaim'd aloud
The Lady Adeline; and like a gleam
  Of sunshine breaking through a morning cloud,
That name awoke him from his absent dream;
  He started, look'd confusion, blush'd and bow'd,
Then first perceiving that the lady next him
Was fair Aurora; his neglect perplex'd him.

XLVIII.

A bow has many meanings: if a friend
  Has introduc'd you, you must make a bow:
You see a tiresome fellow, and pretend
  You do not know him, or at least not now:
He looks at you, you answer with a bend,
  Which serves for a dead cut; and all allow
That if you want to shew a friend the door,
You bow him out, and he will come no more.

XLIX.

But bows, (so call'd perhaps because they're bent
  Like bows, and Cupid has to do with both,)
Are us'd as often with polite intent:
  At meeting or at parting you are loth
A stiff, erect position to present:
  And bows and curtsies are twin children, quoth
The Earl of Chesterfield: a bow engages
Partners for dances, and perhaps for ages.

L.

Don Juan felt his bow extremely useful;
It sav'd him words: and he'd a double reason
For keeping silence: he, who has his shoes full
Of pebbles, like the pilgrim who had peas in,
Is not dispos'd to run a race—which does full
Well for a simile; so when hot tea's in
A gentleman's or lady's mouth, they vent
Right little of their breath in compliment.

LI.

This was one reason, and perhaps the best;
But he'd another, which in Parliament
Makes many a sapient member sit at rest,
Voting in silence: (though with best intent
Some men will talk, as if within their breast
The thoughts of Cicero or Pitt were pent:)
The reason was, that he had not yet thought
What it was best to say, and so said nought.

LII.

But if you ask the reason for his blush,
'Tis not so certain: it is said, that ladies,
Whene'er they please, can bid the colour rush
Tinging their cheeks; a power, which I'm afraid is
Rather gone out at present from the crush
Of balls and crowded rooms: besides, the trade is
So brisk in rouge and other dies from *Paris*,
That colours once put on can never vary.

LIII.

Don Juan's was a deep, a crimson die,
A tulip, or a dahlia most in fashion,
The glow of an autumnal evening sky,
The cheek of a virago in a passion:
These similes are old; and I must try
A new one; it was like to the vibration
Of brazen trumpets: thus at least we find
From Locke, that sounds and colours are combin'd.

LIV.

It was not lost on her, who sat beside him,
  Nor on the company, who shrewdly thought
That a true ghost, unless report belied him,
  Ought to have made him pale; but this had wrought
Such strange effects on him, who had espied him,
  That all the blood of all the Dons, who fought
Against the Moors, appear'd to have been rushing,
And ting'd his cheek with most surprising blushing.

LV.

It pass'd away: he could not eat a bit,
  And could not speak; two things that are unpleasant,
And more so, if a person chance to sit
  Near to a pretty girl and a cold pheasant.
But so it was; his appetite and wit,
  In general so keen, were gone at present:
And quite regardless that he sat before her,
He never spoke a word to fair Aurora.

LVI.

The ladies left the room, and to supply
  Their place the butler brought the letter-bag:
'Tis an arrival dear to ev'ry eye,
  And when the conversation seems to flag,
To break th' impatient seal, and to let fly
  Fresh scraps of news, makes ev'ry mouth to wag;
Politics, scandal, or the last new bonnet,
And many deep remarks are made upon it.

LVII.

I've heard of Cicero's and Pliny's letters;
  Pope's are admir'd, and so are Swift's by many;
But English ladies are by far their betters,
  Writing with equal fluency on any
Subject, and are perhaps the only debtors,
  Who take delight in paying, not a penny,
(As is the case too often,) in the pound,
But with large interest: their thoughts abound,

LVIII.

Run over, and can scarcely be confin'd
Within the limits of a sheet of paper;
Four sides are quite too few; a lady's mind
Cannot be tortur'd and compress'd like vapour;
One single sentence, skilfully combin'd,
And written in a hand genteel and taper,
Requires at least three pages, and though cross'd
It is not charg'd as double by the post.

LIX.

No—but it ought to be; and much I wonder,
That Hume, (not he, who wrote our history,
And one, whose name, unless I greatly blunder,
In future histories we shall not see,)
Has never mov'd that this nefarious plunder
Should be expos'd and not allow'd to be:
" I move, that he, or she, who shall presume
" To cross their letters——" but I'm not a Hume,

LX.

And cannot frame a Bill to make it treason.
  But this I know, that if I am inviting
A friend to dine, or in the shooting season
  Send him a present, or if I am writing
On any other subject which I seize on
  Of equal consequence, the mere enditing
Of one whole page to me is a hard case,
While ladies fill a sheet, and still want space.

LXI.

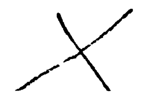
However I confess 'tis great delight
  To *read* a letter, though it fill four pages:
'Tis sweet to see confess'd in black and white
  The thoughts of her who our whole soul engages:
'Tis sweet to find our man of business write,
  That notwithstanding all our learned sages
Have prophesied the nation's sure decay,
Our tenants paid their rents at Lady-day.

LXII.

Such are the happy thoughts the postman brings.
The Paper too, that vehicle of news,
Which wafts upon its damp and flutt'ring wings
Receipts for polishing our minds or shoes,
Relates the fall of Spanish Bonds or Kings,
Skimming the cream of libels and reviews;
The Newspaper, that household god of Britain,
Shall cheer me, while I have a room to sit in.

LXIII.

Let me be *solus* in a Coffee-room,
Close to the fire, while Parliament is sitting,
A pint of wine and biscuits, Mr. Brougham
And Canning exercising all their wit in
A grave debate, which is to fix the doom
Of empires, or on other subjects fitting
The gravity of those, who when in London
Must make a nightly speech, or they are undone.



LXIV.

But how is this connected with our story?
  The Morning Post may be a charming paper,
So may the Times; but I confess before I
  Consent to buy them, printing must be cheaper;
And Juan being neither Whig nor Tory
  Could hardly care the value of a taper
For all the news, which serious or solemn
Is daily introduc'd to fill a column.

LXV.

Stop, gentle reader, think not this digression
  Is merely foisted in to swell the poem:
I'm not a traveller, whose first impression
  Revels in royal quarto, with a proem,
Notes, plates, appendix, index—the profession
  Will not be angry—all the grudge I owe 'em
Is, that our books of travels to my eyes
Are heavy—not in matter—but in size.

LXVI.

Why must the book appear in royal quarto?
  Why must the margin be two inches broad?
Why must the lines be plac'd so wide, and far too
  Asunder, leaving such a handsome road
Between them? Is there need of so much care to
  Thicken the hot-press'd vellum, and to load
Our shelves with tomes of such a monstrous size,
Like the old Fathers and their Homilies?

LXVII.

An author, to be read, should print his book
  In such a size, that lounging o'er the fire
In elbow chair or sofa we may look
  Without an effort o'er it, and not tire
Our hands with holding it; or if the cook,
  Thanks to her well-serv'd dinner, should inspire
A gentle nap, a duodecimo
Will not awake us, falling on our toe.

LXVIII.

The price of books is hurtful to our nation:
Not that I wish an author or a poet
To die, like Otway, of extreme starvation;
He, who has genius, may surely shew it
And purchase in the Funds; and the creation
Of family possessions, if he owe it,
Not to the usual chances of the crowd,
But to his own rich brains, may make him proud.

LXIX.

A writer, call'd at Rome Ovidius Naso,
By schoolboys Ovid, tells us, that the age
Is made of iron; other poets say so;
And politicians in financial rage
Call it an age of paper: well! they may so:
But look through ancient times, and I'll engage
That hungry poets never could behold
Till these our times a real age of gold.

D 2

LXX.

What did the ancients know of copy-right?
Were circulating libraries invented,
When Homer set out begging to recite
"The tale of Troy divine," and was contented
With feeling, for the gods had dimm'd his sight,
Some paltry halfpence now and then presented?
Virgil indeed for his imperial flattery
Receiv'd a handsome present of sestertii:

LXXI.

But authors till our days were mostly fam'd
For dirty garrets, and for tatter'd raiment:
Before the sheets were written, they were claim'd
By cruel creditors in part of payment;
Epic, dramatic, lyric, all that's nam'd
In prose or verse, in earnest or in play meant,
All subjects were exhausted; but the scholars
Were still acquainted more with duns than dollars.

LXXII.

At length the Genius of Invention wav'd
Her magic wand, and said, My sons, why grovel
In those laborious paths, which have not sav'd
Your learned tribes from prison or the hovel?
A new and easy road awaits you, pav'd
With blocks of gold, not granite—write a novel.
She spoke—and quick a thousand geese were slain
To furnish quills for all the scribbling train.

LXXIII.

Hence gentlemen and ladies, boys and misses,
Scholars and poets, peeresses and peers,
Have all describ'd the mystery of kisses,
Courtships, engagements, treachery and tears,
In short the heart's anatomy; and this is
The reading most admir'd in later years.
Hence authors have grown rich: but are their pages
Grown rich in knowledge?—that's for other sages:

LXXIV.

We'll to our story, which has left the news-
paper and letters waiting to be read:
Juan was not a man, who lov'd to use
His pen in writing letters; he was bred
Where a paternal monarch does not choose
To tolerate mail-coaches, which would spread
His subjects' billets doux and their opinions
Too quickly through his sensitive dominions.

LXXV.

Hence Juan's bill for postage was a trifle,
A pauper might have paid it: but this morning
A foreign letter came—as if a rifle
Had sounded at his ear to give him warning,
He started, and 'twas plain he wish'd to stifle
Some sudden pang; he could not throw an awning
O'er those dark eyes, which drench'd with pearly rain
Reveal'd some secret mystery of pain.

LXXVI.

Whether his mother had resign'd her breath,
Or done a deed disgraceful to her rank; or
An aunt had died with nothing to bequeath;
Or ruin had surpris'd his Spanish banker;
Whether the fairest flow'r in beauty's wreath,
His pretty Leila, felt the chilling canker,
With'ring e'er yet the blossom was expanded:
Whether some corsairs from Algiers had landed,

LXXVII.

And swept the shores of good king Ferdinand,
Packing his faithful subjects off by dozens;
Whether the Holy Office had trepann'd
And set their seal on his too lib'ral cousins;
Whether the Empress sent a reprimand,
And his own conscience smote him for a few sins;
Whether—but read the following Canto, and
The cause of his surprise you'll understand.

LXXVIII.

Like as the little pinnace, which survives,
  When the proud vessel sinks to rise no more,
With tatter'd sail and leaky timbers strives
  To brave the swelling surge and tempest's roar,
Redeeming from the wreck some scanty lives,
  Perhaps with deeper suff'rings yet in store;
Slowly they sail, and as the vessel reels,
Alternate hope and fear each bosom feels:

LXXIX.

So from that piteous wreck, where Poetry
  And Genius sank into the dark abyss,
My little bark has fac'd the stormy sea:
  Each passing moment threatens me, that this
Shall be my last: the waves environ me,
  And rocks, which I can hardly hope to miss,
Alone upon the ocean dark and wide,
No star to light me, and no chart to guide.

LXXX.

Few treasures have been sav'd from that sad wreck:
They were his own, by Nature's bounty given,
And perish'd with him: Oh! that I could deck
My fragile bark with a few remnants riven
And shatter'd, but still shining like a speck
Of orient gold upon the gates of heaven!
In the light breeze my flutt'ring sail should play,
And the hush'd billows listen to my lay.

LXXXI.

That wreck was awful and complete: no pray'r
Was offer'd to appease the angry surge;
It threaten'd, it destroy'd: the morn was fair,
At eventide the tempests howl'd their dirge.
Those lofty thoughts, the fancy that could wear
A thousand shapes, were hurried to that verge,
The unseen strait, which parts the shallow sea
Of life, and ocean of eternity.

END OF THE SEVENTEENTH CANTO.

DON JUAN.

CANTO XVIII.

DON JUAN.

CANTO XVIII.

I.

'Tis a sad sound, that ling'ring last Farewell,
When friends must separate, perhaps for ever;
But sadder, when 'tis follow'd by the knell,
Which tells us, that our loves and friendships never
Again on earth in sweetest bands shall dwell.
'Tis vain to weep: Death's chilly hand will sever
Affection's dearest ties; tears cannot save,
Nor sorrow call one victim from the grave.

II.

And yet we weep: the hands of Nature bind
The parent and the child in links of love;
Nor could I envy him, who has resign'd
Such ties without one parting pang to prove
That he'd a heart of flesh: the ivy twin'd
Around the aged monarch of the grove
Still loves to curl its leafy honors round
The parent oak, though prostrate on the ground.

III.

Young Juan wept: those brief and hasty lines,
Which call'd from Nature's fount the gushing tears
To dew his full dark eyes, were mournful signs
That all was over; she, whose hopes and fears
Had watch'd him from the cradle, where reclines
A mother's infant treasure, through the years
Of boyish pastime, to that riper time,
When strength and grace spring forth in manhood's prime,

IV.

She, who had lov'd him with a tenderness
  That border'd on idolatry, whose eye,
Gazing on his young virtues to excess,
  Could not endure the torture to espy
Ought that could make her doat upon him less,
  She died; and gather'd to her ancestry,
Ashes to ashes, left her dying blessing
To him, whom still her fancy was caressing.

V.

Her thoughts had wander'd ere the spirit fled,
  And with glaz'd eye on vacancy directed
She saw, or seem'd to see, among the dead
  A living form, with eye and air dejected—
It was her son; and she would stoop her head
  As if to catch the kiss which she expected:
And she would call him, "Juan, Juan, speak,
" Thy mother calls thee," and her dying shriek,

VI.

For her's was not the placid, tranquil tone
  Of souls departing; but the shrieking cry
Of one in torture; 'twas, " My son, my son,
  " Heav'n guard my Juan! fly, my Juan, fly!
" Stay not in that grim prison-house alone;
  " See where those bloodless spectres hover nigh:
" May heaven's blessing——" and to heaven's King
Th' unfinish'd prayer was borne on seraph's wing.

VII.

Juan had seen the ocean's fury heap'd:
  Had gaz'd upon his friend's warm blood that flow'd
At that inhuman banquet; he had steep'd
  And purpled his fair symmetry in blood,
When in the breach his virgin falchion reap'd
  Its gory harvest, and his friends were mow'd
In one promiscuous slaughter: but no tear,
Not one complaining, pitying sob was there.

VIII.

And yet he sorrow'd when his mother died;
He wept—not o'er her tomb, for he was far,
Far distant from his native home, and sigh'd
That when his mother breath'd her dying pray'r,
He was not near to echo it: the tide
Of sorrow, of affection, and despair
Broke o'er his troubled soul; and he had gladly
Shar'd the cold tomb with her, who died so sadly.

IX.

Why had she died so sadly? Did the thought
Of a long absent and ungrateful son
Break her parental heart? And was she brought
To madness, to an early grave, by one,
Who roving careless and at ease had bought
His pleasures at so dear a price, and done
A deed of blackest die? Nor was there given
One glimm'ring hope of meeting her in heaven?

X.

Her last, her dying words were turn'd to him:
  But how? What meant she by that troubled scream?
Did she reproach him? As her eyes grew dim,
  Did they receive a strange, prophetic gleam
Of ministers of death and phantoms grim,
  Waiting to plunge him in the burning stream?
And yet she bless'd him: with her dying breath
She seem'd to rescue him from worse than death.

XI.

Full well did he remember the embrace,
  The warm, the fost'ring arms, which she had thrown
Around him, when he left his native place:
  Now they were cold and bloodless as the stone
Which cover'd the frail remnants of his race:
  His ancient halls were empty; and alone,
Last of his line, he seem'd to feel around him
No friendly link, no kindred tie, that bound him.

XII.

But he might see her tomb; and he might pour
A flood of filial tears where she was laid;
Might kneel on the cold marble, and implore
A late forgiveness from her peaceful shade:
At least 'twould yield some solace, if before
He died, the last sad tribute he had paid;
And praying near his mother's tomb might rest
His bones with her's, contented, if not blest.

XIII.

Juan was quick in counsel: to decide
With him depended not on anxious thought:
He felt, and his strong feelings were his guide;
Not always right; but when his mind had caught
Some warm impression, whether it were pride,
Or passion, or affection, it had wrought
So strongly in a moment, that control
Might check, not quell, the current of his soul.

XIV.

An hour before, the land he lov'd so well
And all that it contain'd, had not employ'd
A single thought: the travell'd boy would tell
His story, till the list'ning ear was cloy'd:
Danger and pleasure with alternate swell
His vessel on the sea of life had buoy'd:
And seldom did he check his course, to cast
One ling'ring look on objects that were past.

XV.

'Tis pleasing at the time when youth and health
Flow through each vein, and when the opening mind,
Unform'd, may by contrivance or by stealth
Be moulded and unalterably inclin'd
To good or evil, where the precious wealth
Of learning and of knowledge is consign'd
As to a storehouse, whose contents are growing,
Ever increasing, never overflowing;

XVI.

'Tis sweet in those bright days to feast the eye
With that rich banquet, which a foreign land,
Strange faces, stranger manners can supply;
To see how Nature, with fantastic hand,
Loves to distort the shape, and change the die;
But all bespeak one mighty, same command,
Like fragments of a mirror, where you trace
In countless outlines still the self-same face.

XVII.

It has been said, that travel as you will,
You find but two varieties of being,
And these are man and woman: you may fill
Your journals with the nations you've been seeing,
The dark, the fair, the red, the swarthy, still
You find the scatter'd tribes are all agreeing
In passions, appetites, and all the features
Which mark the characters of human creatures.

XVIII.

It may be so—but still the mind improves
By tracing this profound analogy:
A mistress and a knife the Signor loves,
While Monsieur loves Napoleon and Comédie;
Mynheer a pipe and gravity approves,
The Don an empty purse and pedigree.
Something we learn from each; and we may see
Their follies in ourselves in less degree.

XIX.

But why should English more than other nations
Learn French, get passports, and embark at Dover?
Some go, because they're put upon half-rations,
And some because their purse is running over:
Tutors and pupils in their several stations
Gain new ideas, and perhaps may cover
The native lustre of the solid mass
With Gallic tinsel or Corinthian brass.

XX.

Is it, that Nature loves to rear her throne
 Midst Alpine heights, with snows eternal crown'd,
Where from his icy bed the hasty Rhone
 Darts his blue waters through the yawning ground?
Or does she reign in southern climes alone,
 Where spring eternal wheels her ceaseless round,
Where thrice the teeming fields their gifts bestow,
And Bacchus, laughing god, surveys the clust'ring row?

XXI.

What! do no summits tow'r above our isle?
 No sylvan scenes of crag and woody steep?
No headlong torrents foam, no valleys smile?
 Say, Caledonia, do thy eagles sleep,
That us'd to soar o'er Lomond's craggy pile?
 Where are thy Naiads, that were wont to weep
In fleecy tears, until the echoing roar
Of waters thunder'd on the distant shore?

XXII.

Say, Cambria, and from Snowdon's cliffs declare
The heaving mountains swelling to the sky,
Peak above peak, like ocean's billows, where
Spangled and glitt'ring with azure die
The bosoms of an hundred lakes appear:
Beneath, old Mona's sacred meadows lie,
And frowning o'er the strait, that glides between,
Caernarvon's regal walls still speak of Edward's queen.

XXIII.

'Tis true, no mantle of eternal snow
Shrouds the tall summits of Britannia's hills;
No sea of ice, with progress sure though slow,
Once smiling vales with wintry wildness fills:
No avalanches crush the flock below;
No shepherd's heart with cutting anguish thrills,
To find his home, his wife, his babes, his all
Veil'd from his sight for ever in Death's icy pall.

XXIV.

Yet have we beauties in our sea-girt land,
  Such as appear'd in joyous mood to him,
Who tun'd his harp-strings with a shepherd's hand
  Ere that with age and grief his eyes were dim,
And loftier themes of the angelic band,
  Of man's sad fall, and warring seraphim,
Call'd him to holier strains, and bade his lute
To jocund mirth and sylvan scenes be mute.

XXV.

Such too as he, the Minstrel of the North,
  Still in the softest, sweetest measures sings,
The bard of nature, at whose word come forth
  Mountain and dell, dark heath, and glassy springs:
What heart, what tongue is senseless to thy worth?
  To fancy's eye they are no fabled things;
We see the mountain catch the rising ray,
In Katrine's lake the living waters play.

XXVI.

But though I suffer English men to travel,
The Muse, a miss, unprivileg'd by marriage,
Ought not to ramble far, except where gravel
Well broken shews the road is for a carriage—
The broad, the turnpike road—though to unravel
The plot or fable, I would not disparage
A good digression—but my Muse will go on
So far, that I must bring her back to Juan.

XXVII.

Juan resolv'd, that he would go to Spain,
As fast as horses, wind and tide, would take him:
He told his host the secret of his pain,
And fix'd next morning early; nought could shake him,
Each moment seem'd an age; and it was plain,
That there was something more than grief to make him
Set off so quickly—you may call it nonsense,
But Juan really had qualms of conscience.

XXVIII.

It happen'd, that this evening had been fix'd
For all the company to pay a visit:
They were to dine from home; and though 'twas mix'd
With some reluctance, after all what is it?
You meet a vulgar neighbour, you are vex'd
With vulgar cooking, you go home and quiz it;
You laugh at all you saw and all they said,
And pity them for being so ill-bred.

XXIX.

Going to London for the summer season
Is very well; it gives the milliners
A handsome benefit; and that's the reason
Why many kind papas unfold their purse:
Their daughters must be dress'd; and it were treason
To see them less expensively and worse
Attir'd than other misses who're come out:
See a young lady at a ball or rout,

XXX.

Can you not tell at once by certain airs,
By fashionable tortures of the body,
Whether she's made her entrée in the squares
And streets of London? He must be a noddy,
A perfect flat, a fellow, who repairs
Twice to the soup tureen, and drinks his toddy,
Who cannot tell a town-bred miss from those,
Who pay their country bills and make their clothes.

XXXI.

Look at Miss Bullock—why, her cheek's as red
As a beef-steak, or as a peony;
She shakes you by the hand, and if you've said
A witty thing, she laughs most heartily.
Poor girl! I wish that she were better bred,
And us'd to more genteel society.
It's very hard, that her papa wont let her
Write for some dresses that might fit her better.

XXXII.

Such were the kind remarks, which Miss Mc. Tab
  Made on the worthy folks, who gave the dinner.
It had been rumour'd, that a young Cantab,
  John Thomas Bullock, once had hop'd to win her;
Nor was she cruel, till a fatal stab
  Was given to his hopes, and made him thinner:
She went to Town, and happen'd to discover
Certain objections to a country lover.

XXXIII.

He was a very civil sort of man,
  Quite harmless and good-natur'd, and all that;
She'd nothing more to say against him, than
  That there was something in his manner, what
The French call *gaucherie*, we hardly can
  Express it, we've no term exactly pat:
But ladies fresh from Town have ears and eyes
Finer than country persons and more nice.

XXXIV.

At five, (for at that very gothic hour
The Bullocks din'd,) the carriages were ready.
Juan remain'd at home, that he might pour
His griefs in silence: he had been unsteady,
And never settling long upon a flow'r,
Capricious as the wind, or a young lady,
But Nature now had touch'd upon a deep
And plaintive chord, whose music would not sleep.

XXXV.

It was an evening—but alas! what poet
Has left the evening's varied charms unsung?
The setting orb, the mantling clouds that shew it
Half veil'd, and yet all glorious among
The gold-fring'd curtains of the night; below it
In some clear stream the dusky mountains flung
In lengthen'd shadows—scenes like these are wrought
With all the rich luxuriance of thought.

XXXVI.

It was an evening, which the magic brush
  Of Claude has ting'd with hues of heavenly birth;
The still, the breathless calm, which seems to hush
  All nature into silence, save the mirth
Of tuneful songsters, who from many a bush
  Pour their blithe carols, while the list'ning earth
Is veil'd in darkness, and the queen of night
Her pale lamp kindles at the sun's last light.

XXXVII.

That light upon the western hills was glowing,
  Wrapping their leafy summits in a blaze
Of burning gold: the breezes gently blowing
  Ruffled the lake's fair bosom, where the rays
A broken, bickering, light were faintly throwing;
  And in the rippling wave the eye might gaze
On tow'rs and battlements, whose airy height
Frown'd more majestic through the shades of night

XXXVIII.

Juan had stepp'd with slow, unsteady pace
  His chamber's length, and thought with many a sigh
Of the last look and of the last embrace
  Of her, who bore him: in his tearful eye
The parting scene was fresh, the time, the place,
  Where he had said and heard the last "good bye;"
'Twas night; and he remember'd the dark cloud
Which veil'd the moon-beam in a transient shroud.

XXXIX.

He mus'd upon the scene; he rais'd his head
  Unwittingly, and saw the moon's full orb
Ascend all glorious from her chilly bed;
  Proudly she rose, as hast'ning to absorb
The scatter'd glories, which the sun had shed,
  And reckless of the evils which disturb
This lower world, where suns shall set and rise
Till the last change, which melts earth, sea and skies,

XL.

The pure serenity of night, the lake
  Ruffled yet calm, on which the setting beams
Hung ling'ring still, and trembling seem'd to quake
  In sportive dalliance with the paler gleams
Reflected from the moon, all help'd to slake
  The fever of his soul; and the sad dreams
Which haunted him, were hush'd and silenc'd by
The sweet composure of an evening sky.

XLI.

He felt the dewy freshness on his brow,
  And ventur'd forth in solitude, to tell
His sorrows to the moon: he thought not now
  Of pleasure and of revelry, whose spell
Had fetter'd his young soul: above, below,
  Around him all was quiet: night could quell
Creation's busy murmurs: but the breast
Of conscience-stricken man, where finds it rest?

XLII.

He thought himself alone: he thought no sound
Was near him, save at times the fitful plash
Of water creeping o'er its pebbly bound,
Or breezes rustling through some leafy ash;
Sudden he started: was it fairy ground?
Was he entranc'd? And had he dar'd with rash
And vent'rous footstep, thus uncall'd, to pry
Where beings not of this world hover'd nigh?

XLIII.

It was no earthly voice: that harmony
Was not from mortal choir: so soft, so sweet,
It floated on the breeze and then would die,
And swell again, and echoing seem'd to meet
The notes of seraphs warbling through the sky.
He listen'd—but he only heard the beat
Of his own heart: the music ceas'd; and yet
It was a sound that he could not forget.

XLIV.

He thought it was Aurora: had she staid
At home in solitude? Perhaps she wept
For him and for his loss: perhaps she pray'd,
And pour'd a requiem for her who slept:
Their creeds were similar: the pious maid
Sorrow'd as for a mother; and she kept
Her mournful vigils, hailing with sweet strains
The soul's departure from this land of pains.

XLV.

So Juan hop'd: but did the music cease?
Earthly or heavenly those melting notes
Were soothing to his soul; peace, gentle peace,
Is wafted with the melody that floats
On the cool breeze of evening, and enchains
Each ravish'd sense: the lonely wand'rer dotes
To catch the distant song, and stops to hear
The latest cadence die upon his ear.

XLVI.

But what if she, whom he has lov'd, be singing?
Did Juan love? He could not, dar'd not breathe
The name of love; and yet his thoughts were clinging
To other memories than those of death:
He thought of the fair syren; who was flinging
Her wild notes to the night; and as a wreath
Of clouds pass'd o'er the moon, a thought was given
To her, whose spirit join'd the choir in heaven.

XLVII.

Aurora sang her requiem: perchance
She breath'd a pray'r for him, who linger'd here
Motherless, friendless: might it not enhance
His suit, that she had sorrow'd o'er the bier
Of a fond mother? She too knew the glance,
The last, the dying glance, when death is near.
But hark! 'twas she: the music swell'd again,
And Juan breathless listen'd to the strain.

I know thee not—youth's lovely roses
Have fled thy cheek:
The charm that beauty's hue discloses
In vain I seek.

Music to me can breathe no pleasure,
Thou singst not now:
The dance invites—I hear the measure—
But where art thou?

Oh! time has prest his ruthless fingers,
Thy form is wasted;
I know thee not: no vestige lingers
Of beauty blasted.

And yet I feel a fond remembrance,
It cheers me still:
Those inward graces, heav'n's resemblance,
Age cannot kill.

I know thee still—farewell the joy
　　That youth can give:
Age may those fleeting charms destroy,
　　Thy virtues live.

XLVIII.

It was Aurora: but alas! the knell
　Of death had rung less heavy on his ear,
Than that soft melody, which broke the spell
　Of all his fond delusions: did he hear
A sing-song ditty, sweet perhaps, and well
　Attun'd, but fitter for an earthly sphere
Than for the thoughts, which had entranc'd his soul
And steep'd it in elysium? The bright goal,

XLIX.

Which for a moment he had grasp'd, his mother,
His love, all vanish'd like a fleeting shade;
The song was not of him; and did another
Possess the heart, to which *his* thoughts had stray'd?
Her words reveal'd it: and she seem'd to smother
A faint, yet living flame, which once had play'd
In kindling warmth within her breast, nor yet
Could she the ling'ring, dying warmth forget.

L.

But how could one so young have felt the pang
Of plighted love by time and sorrow broken?
It could not, must not be: perhaps she sang
Not from her heart: it might not be a token
Of faith still constant to a name which rang
Upon her ear in silence, and was spoken
To the pale moon at evening—no—the lay
Came as by chance to drive ennui away.

LI.

At least so Juan thought: but he had gone
To bed in better spirits, and slept sounder,
(Though lovers sometimes keep awake, and moan,
Crying, that pretty, teazing girl, confound her!
Wont let me sleep,) but Juan, had he known
That Miss Aurora lov'd him, had he found her
Singing at evening to a Spanish tune,
He had not thought of—setting off so soon.

LII.

The horses were to come by four: his valet
Had pack'd his clothes; and he was quite, quite sure,
That he would go to Spain; why should he dally
And fret about a little, shy, demure,
And pretty English girl: it would not tally
With his Castilian blood, so old and pure,
To graft from such a stock: he would not think
About her—yet he did not sleep a wink.

LIII.

And yet he did not start at four o'clock,
  Nor did his valet call him: he arose,
Startled by cries at midnight, and a shock,
  As if the fabric with convulsive throes
Was reeling, and his chamber seem'd to rock
  From some tremendous crash: and at its close
The heavens in a moment were o'erspread
With one wide blaze of burning, fiery red.

LIV.

The Abbey was in flames: while all were laid,
  Save Juan, in a calm and deathlike sleep,
The fire crept slowly on, and creeping made
  Its banquet, travelling with many a leap
From beam to beam, with sculpture overlaid,
  The work of ages past, when oak was cheap,
And architects some wise receipt had got,
To season timber and avoid dry rot.

LV.

But old well-season'd timber burns the quicker.
When mix'd with coal it makes a charming blaze
At Christmas: how I love to heap it thicker
And thicker in those short but cheerful days,
When chatting we perceive the blue flame flicker,
Sure sign of frost: but still I could not praise
The housemaid, who to drive away the frost
Burns down the mansion to her master's cost.

LVI.

The fire of London, which, they say, began
In Pudding-lane and ended in Pie-corner,
Was caus'd,—but stories disagree: one man
Will blame the Papists: he, who is a scorner
Of party libels, thinks that all we can
Pronounce for certain is, that on one morn ere
The family were up, a careless sloven
Put too much fuel in a baker's oven.

LVII.

Thus half a city, houses, streets and quays,
  St. Paul's Cathedral, and some dozen churches,
Were burnt to ashes, and yet no one says
  Who caus'd the fire: 'tis so with my researches
Concerning Norman Abbey: from the days
  When the first founder made the pious purchase,
The western turret with its massy roof
Had kept the firemen and their fires aloof.

LVIII.

It was the western turret, which in tumbling
  Had caus'd the crash that shook Don Juan's bed:
The fire had burnt unseen; the rafters crumbling
  Before the greedy element had spread
No warning; and no ear had heard the rumbling
  Of cracking walls, crush'd floors, and molten lead.
The warning came: but 'twas the awful stroke
That shivers with one flash the shelt'ring oak.

LIX.

The flame had reach'd the roof; and as a stream
  Swollen by rain with one indignant sweep
Bears off the puny barriers that seem
  To challenge its advance, and vainly keep
The flood at bay—so when the fiery gleam
  Once burst its prison-house, and o'er the steep
Impending roof the smoky volumes roll'd,
One sudden, thund'ring crash their progress told.

LX.

No wind was needed on that breathless night
  To hasten the destruction: one wide flood
Of flame burst forth to a Vesuvian height,
  And in a moment fell: the heavens glow'd,
Till thick, dark volumes wheel'd their tardy flight,
  Veiling the moon in a Cimmerian shroud;
And fiery streaks shot forth, but to illume
At intervals th' impenetrable gloom.



LXI.

Now all was hurry and dismay: the bell,
That us'd to summon them to revelry,
Rang a discordant peal, and told too well
Its most untimely news: the piercing cry,
Terror, despair, commands, enquiries, fell
On ev'ry ear; and as they hurried by,
Seeking escape, each thund'ring crash would sound
Louder and nearer, till they shook the ground.

LXII.

Juan had join'd the flying, trembling throng,
And tried to rally them; but it was vain;
They saw the fiery torrent sweep along
The chambers, where so lately they had lain
In unsuspecting slumber; and so strong
An impulse seiz'd each hurrying guest to gain
Some place of safety, that none stopp'd to save
A friend or kinsman from their fiery grave.

LXIII.

They paus'd not, till they reach'd the outward air,
  Where such a group was gather'd, as was seen
By Dante, when the dim and fitful glare
  Of hell reveal'd to him the dismal scene
Of spirits doom'd to wander in despair,
  Moaning, and sorrowing: just so between
Th' alternate glimmerings of light the eye
Discern'd the trembling forms that hurried by.

LXIV.

Some were half-dress'd: and she, who yesternight
  Chided the rudeness of the breeze which dar'd
To play amongst her ringlets, and to blight
  The blushing roses of her cheek, now bar'd
Her tender form to the inclement night:
  Some knelt, and pray'd aloud; some wept, or shar'd
The fancied shelter of each other's grasp,
Clenching they knew not who with frantic clasp.

LXV.

But there was one, whose bosom did not beat
With selfish terrors: as each transient flash
Illum'd the pallid group, he sought to meet
One form, which could he rescue from the crash
Of burning ruin, he had brav'd the sleet
Of fiery hail; and joyfully would dash
Through the thick, suffocating cloud: but where
Had his Aurora fled? She was not there.

LXVI.

Aurora Raby with that pensive cast
Of thought, which mark'd her from her infant years,
Slept in a solitary room, the last
Of a long suite, which some from childish fears
Would not inhabit: next to it was plac'd
A chapel, now not us'd; and there were jeers
Which hinted, that the Popish girl had made
This choice, that she might have the Virgin's aid.

LXVII.

Juan bethought him of the song which shew'd
The spot where his Aurora's chamber lay.
He ran, but burning fragments strew'd the road,
And gasping he beheld the floor give way
Which in one moment more he would have trode.
That access was debarr'd; and in dismay
He sought the terrace, where so lately strolling
He heard Aurora's plaintive music rolling.

LXVIII.

Her window was above him: but he lept
With one light bound, unconscious of the height,
And reaching it perceiv'd that where she slept
The greedy flame was revelling: the sight
Appall'd, but not o'ercame him; still he kept
His true Castilian spirit, that a knight
Should face the flames unflinching, and should die
For church, for lady fair, and chivalry.

LXIX.

Aurora was not there; and though the heat
  Scarce suffer'd him to breathe, he hasten'd on,
Passing a narrow door, and at the feet
  Of a small, simple crucifix of stone
She knelt, and pray'd aloud: there was a sweet
  Composure in her face, as might have shone
In martyrs' features, when they knelt to feel
The wish'd-for keenness of the ruthless steel.

LXX.

She pray'd aloud: her tresses unconfin'd
  Flow'd loosely down: her robes were virgin white,
Arrang'd with decent care: she was resign'd
  To death; and when the flames forbade her flight,
She sought this shrine of refuge, where her mind
  Was wrapp'd in visions of celestial light:
And kneeling at the altar of her God
She pray'd admission to his blest abode.

LXXI.

Juan twice call'd her, but she did not look:
It was no time for parley—his alarm
Shut ceremony out; at once he took
Her slender form in his encircling arm,
And ere her wilder'd memory awoke,
He bore her all unconscious through the warm
And stifling smoke, regardless of the heat
And burning boards that glow'd beneath his feet.

LXXII.

One moment later, the succumbing floor
Had buried them in flames; but he descended,
And tracing back his footsteps heard the roar
Of the red torrent nearer, which extended
Barring his passage; and the only door
Seem'd by a triple fiery guard defended.
They could not pass: the ground, on which they stood,
Was as the brink of a wide, fiery flood.

LXXIII.

Behind them was the long, deserted range
  Of chambers tenanted at length by flame;
In front the lake; there seem'd but an exchange
  From death to death; destruction was the same
From either element; he was not strange
  To cleaving the deep wave; but if he came
To shore alone, and his Aurora perish'd,
The only hope was gone, which he had cherish'd.

LXXIV.

He stood upon th' embattled wall, which rose
  Some twenty feet above the tranquil lake;
For it was tranquil, hush'd in calm repose,
  And the unruffled mirror seem'd to take
The tinge of fiery crimson, such as glows
  In an autumnal sky, when sunbeams slake
In western seas the fervor of their rays:
So shone the glow of that reflected blaze.

LXXV.

It was the last reflection that e'er fell
From Norman's sacred pile; and ere the walls
Sank in their final crash, they seem'd to swell
To more majestic height; the ancient halls
Were canopied with flame; and legends tell,
That a dark, shrouded form amidst the calls
Of unseen spirits from his prison came,
Treading the palpable and buoyant flame.

LXXVI.

He trode the fiery ladder, and on high
Wav'd his dry, bloodless arms, around him raising
A coronet of flames; and as the sky
Murmur'd hoarse thunders, with swift flashes blazing,
He vanish'd: when a loud, mysterious cry
Was follow'd by a crash.——No eye was gazing
On Norman Abbey—it was gone—the fire
Play'd in mild radiance o'er its funeral pyre.

LXXVII.

But where was Juan? He had heard a sound,
  Which seem'd to whisper him, Away! away!
He started, look'd beneath, and with one bound
  He plung'd into the waves; and as the spray
Mix'd with the kindred tears, that gather'd round
  Aurora's streaming eyes, he saw a ray
Of brightness shine upon him, and he bore
His drooping charge uninjured to the shore.

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